

(Address given by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Annual Faculty Meeting, Notre Dame, Indiana, October 13, 1986)

This is the thirty-fifth and last time that I address the faculty as President, early in a new academic year. It is fitting, and a return to an old tradition, that it be done on the Feast of St. Edward, the Patron of our founder, Father Eduard Sorin. He spent twenty-three years as President of this University, from its founding in 1842 until 1865 when he turned the task over to Father Patrick Dillon. He has had fifteen successors since then and will soon have a sixteenth. I think we have all looked upon him and his life as a kind of unique inspiration for all that this University is and yet will be. That is the theme of my message today.

Father Eduard Sorin was born on February 6, 1814 in a substantial small chateau-like building at La Roche, Ahuillé, Mayonne, France. He was the seventh of nine children in the Sorin family which still inhabits the same house. I was there a few years ago to place a commemorative plaque next to the baptismal font in the parish church in Ahuillé where he was baptized. I also gave a sermon in French on that occasion and consoled myself that my French was probably not worse than Father Sorin's English during his early years at Notre Dame.

Sorin was tutored by the local parish priest, attended the Grand Seminaire at nearby LeMans, and was ordained a priest at age 24 on May 27, 1838. He was pulled in two directions. First, after a year as a country pastor, he was inspired to join another young priest, Father Basil Moreau, who has just founded an Association of

Holy Cross for Priests and Brothers, the latter having been founded earlier by a Father Dujarie. Sorin was one of the first priests of Holy Cross, since he joined as a priest, made his year of novitiate, and took his first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

He then responded to a second nagging pressure. While still a seminarian in 1836, he had heard Simon Brute', a new bishop from the American frontier, tell of his arduous work among the early settlers and Indians in what was one of the Western-most dioceses in the New World, Vincennes, in Southern Indiana, near the best highway West which was the Ohio River. Sorin was on fire at the thought of being a missionary in the wilds among the Indians. He importuned Father Moreau until he was given the assignment to join Simon Brute's successor, Bishop de la Hailandiere, in Indiana. It was no easy journey that Sorin made with a few Brothers. First, at Le Havre he found that his total available money would not pay the passage to New York. This was the first of a lifetime of financial crises. Also, the first of a lifetime of victories snatched from the jaws of defeat. Sorin settled for a few square feet of steerage space below the deck, hung a few blankets, and, voilà, they were on their way.

And a stormy way it was, all 36 days of it. Often the captain was glad he had let Sorin aboard because, at times, everyone was ready for the final absolution. They reached New York, the harbor of hope, on the eve of the Feast of the Exultation of Holy Cross, September 14, 1841. Sorin knelt down and kissed the ground of the

New World. The next day, the Feast Day, he celebrated his first Mass in America.

I was thinking of those 36 stormy days when I went to France for the Sorin commemoration. I had to be in Paris that night, but was chairing an important commission in New York that morning. The only possibility was the Concorde which made the New York-Paris trip in three hours and 32 minutes.

The trip to Vincennes was almost as long as the boat crossing of the Atlantic -- up the Hudson River to Albany, across New York State on the Erie Canal to Buffalo passing my home town of Syracuse. We are told that Sorin took a side trip to see Niagara Falls which proves he was not all business. Then across Lake Erie to Toledo, then Southwest, down a network of roads and rivers. On October 10th, they arrived in Vincennes. They walked the last three hours, fasting from midnight to celebrate a late Sunday Mass. It was the ninth Sunday since they had left France.

Soon the Bishop offered Sorin an outlying mission, but Sorin held out for another, St. Peter's, since already he had a school in mind. The next year was difficult, learning the language, building the mission, always in need and always penniless. Amazingly, within that year, he had attracted twelve novices for Holy Cross, three Germans, one Englishman, and eight Irishmen! Not one Frenchman. After that first year, Sorin approached the Bishop with his dream of building a college. "We already have a college," the Bishop countered. "However, if you are so set on the idea, there is some land at the Northern end of the diocese, which Father Badin left to me in trust for anyone who would build a school there."

Although it was mid-November of what was to be one of the worst Indiana Winters in years, Sorin headed North with seven Brothers on November 16th. They had an ox cart full of goods, blankets, pots and pans, axes and knives. Sorin had managed to scrape together just over \$300.00. Still, his heart sang as he marched into the North wind on a journey 250 miles North. His dream was closer each day and he was only twenty-eight years old, four years a priest, and full of hope. Eleven days later, he ran on ahead and found his way to a countryman's trading post. It had been called Fort St. Joseph on the St. Joseph River, now South Bend. Alexis Coquillard was immediately dragooned by Sorin to take him out to his property by the lake.

Sorin wrote Father Moreau that when he arrived, everything was frozen, especially the lakes which he took to be one. A newly-fallen coat of snow blanketed the scene and sparkled in the rays of the late afternoon sun, slanting in from the West. He told Moreau it reminded him of the purity of the Mother of God and solemnly named this place "L'Universite de Notre Dame du Lac." In his typically exuberant style, the dream of a college, already became the dream of a university.

The name had a good ring to it and, unknown to Sorin, it revived the dream of another missionary from France, Father Claude Allouez, who first came this way and built the log chapel by one of the lakes, St. Mary's, and named it La Mission de Sainte Marie des Lacs. Allouez had hallowed this spot 156 years before in 1686.

But even before that, an even more famous priest, Père Marquette, had passed this way, en route to discovering the Mississippi, and had offered Mass here in 1675, more than a century before our American Declaration of Independence.

Subsequently, there was a French-Indian War which diminished the French influence here, especially since the British were the winners. Then another French priest changed all that. Stephen Theodore Badin, the first Catholic priest ordained in the United States, escaped France as a seminarian during the French Revolution when the eldest daughter of the Church -- La Fille Aînée -- killed off a considerable number of seminarians and priests. Badin finished his theological studies with the Sulpicians in Baltimore and on May 25, 1793, (my birthday, by the way) Badin was ordained a priest by the first American Bishop, John Carroll, cousin of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who signed the Declaration of Independence.

Badin's priestly apostolate carried him ever farther West -- even to the Mission de Sainte Marie des Lacs. He is said to have traveled more than 100,000 miles on horseback throughout Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Kentucky, then the Northwest Territory. At the age of fifty, Badin decided that he needed a sabbatical so he returned to his native France -- the guillotine now decommissioned -- for about a decade. He then returned to his adopted country in 1828.

He was visiting in Detroit with his French friend, Father Gabriel Richard, a U. S. Congressman and co-founder of the University of Michigan, when a Potawatami, Chief Pokagon, came to Detroit

requesting Badin's return to the Lakes with a school teacher as well. "We have kept the faith," Pokagon said and knelt down to recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Apostle's Creed in Potawatami. What could he do? Badin returned to the Mission of St. Mary of the Lakes, with Chief Pokagon and a 68 year old school marm named Miss Angelique Campeau. All three of them have streets bearing their names in South Bend today.

We are told that within five years, he had baptized 300 more Indians. Since he had a helper now, a Belgian priest named Father Louis Deseille, Badin retired to Cincinnati in 1835, but not before he had purchased the 524 acres of land that was to be Sorin's legacy.

Deseille died two years after Badin left. There is still a painting in the present Log Chapel showing him giving himself viaticum, the last Communion, after the Indians carried him to the Chapel from Niles where he became ill. They buried him on the lakeside hill, alongside the Chapel.

Deseille was replaced by a newly-ordained French priest from Rennes in Brittany named Father Benjamin-Marie Petit. He had hardly begun when in 1837 all Eastern Indian tribes were forcibly relocated West of the Mississippi to accommodate the white settlers. Shades of South Africa! Petit made the trip from the Lakes to the Osage Territory (now Tulsa, Oklahoma) with the Potawatami -- half of whom died en route. Petit himself, thoroughly exhausted, died in St. Louis while returning.

Five years later, Sorin arrived here. In later years, the Log Chapel burned, but was faithfully reconstructed. Long after his death in 1853, Badin's remains were returned from Cincinnati and buried in the Log Chapel. Sorin exhumed Deseille's body at the lakeside, returned Petit's remains from St. Louis and they both were buried in the basement of Sacred Heart Church. I pray for them on my way to Mass as I pass their common tomb each day. Sorin respected the giants who had made this a holy place long before he arrived. Institutional memory is a powerful force, so often neglected in our day.

One of Sorin's first acts was to engage an architect to design his first college building to be begun in early Spring of 1843. There had been three feet of snow on the ground all Winter. The lake ice was 20 inches deep, but Sorin and the Brothers lived all Winter long in the drafty cabin which was a chapel again. When the ice went out, Sorin made over a hundred thousand bricks from the marl he found in the lakes and felled the largest trees for the lumber he would need for his first building. When the architect failed to arrive, he and the Brothers built the building themselves and had students in it by Fall. We are still using it today under the modest name, Old College. It is the residence of Notre Dame students aspiring to the priesthood in Holy Cross.

One of his best teachers was Père Gâtien, 16 years old when he arrived at Du Lac. Others soon joined Sorin, making him seem like a veritable Pied Piper. Only 28 months out of France, he had over 50 new candidates for the Congregation of Holy Cross.

That first school year of 1843, around this early Fall time, the local Senator, the Honorable John B. Defrees, a Methodist, visited Notre Dame. He was pleased to learn that all students were accepted here "without any distinction of belief." There was nothing like this within a radius of 400 miles, so Defrees proceeded to write them a magnificent university charter which he had enacted by the State Legislature of Indiana on January 15, 1844, just over a year from Sorin's arrival.

That Charter reads: "They shall have perpetual succession, with full power and authority, to confer and grant ... such degrees and diplomas in the liberal arts and sciences, and in law and medicine, as are usually conferred and granted in other universities of the United States: Provided, however, that no degrees shall be conferred or diplomas granted except to students who have acquired the same proficiency in the liberal arts and sciences, and in law and medicine, as is customary in other universities in the United States." In 1967, by official action of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the perpetual succession was decreed to include a majority of laymen and laywomen as Trustees of the University, this action duly recorded by the Secretary of State of Indiana.

Returning to our story, Sorin again wrote Moreau that he would not exchange his hopes for anyone's in the United States. He also promptly became a citizen and a very patriotic one at that. One of his earliest buildings was named after the Father of our country, George Washington. He soon had Henry Clay



declare Notre Dame a post office with Sorin as Postmaster so he could save postage on his letters which were sent free. He built a proper church which was consecrated in 1849, a larger one in 1872, while buildings sprouted up all over like mushrooms, especially his Main Building which practically was the whole college and residential facilities combined. Many of these were built without the proper authorization of the Motherhouse in Le Mans, although Sorin continued to request more people from France. By May of 1846, he had 68 members, eight priests, 38 Brothers, and 19 Sisters, some of whom were soon to found St. Mary's College across the way. The local Bishop of Vincennes took a rather dim view of all of this development in four years time. He only wanted a small school, but Sorin, who could tell what he wanted? Obviously not a sleepy small establishment.

Sorin was a veritable magician when one considers the meager resources he had on arrival. He was always in debt, but always building and expanding. If the Bishop had his doubts, the Motherhouse, much further away in Europe, was mystified when each letter brought news of more development, again done precipitously without proper approval. They decided on drastic action. Father Sorin was assigned to supervise the new Holy Cross Missions in Bengal, half way around the world, in 1852. He was told he would become a young Bishop at 38 years of age.

Sorin, despite his vow of obedience, simply said, "No, I won't go. This work is too important." Of course, from a religious point of view, he was wrong and soon enough recognized this himself.

Six months later, spiritually devastated, he agreed to go to Bengal. Fortunately for us, the Founder, Father Moreau, relented and let Sorin stay at Notre Dame. It would never have made it without him. Five years later, Moreau visited Notre Dame and was astonished at what he saw, as was the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris who visited us this Spring. Sorin obviously had great vision, but great faith, too.

1855 was a kind of baseline with 100 students, mainly boarders. Five years later in 1860 there were 213 students. Not until the middle 80's did they pass 400 students, with another 175 across the road at St. Mary's. If this surprises you, recall that Harvard University founded in 1636, had only 500 students in 1868. Meanwhile, Sorin had started other schools in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Kentucky.

However, Notre Dame remained the center of Sorin's dream. To bolster his finances in 1850, he sent four Brothers and three laymen off to seek treasure in the California Gold Rush. This was not one of his better ideas, but at least an indication of his creativity. After this fiasco, he took a trip to Le Mans to mend his fences.

Years later in 1869, Sorin was elected Superior General of Holy Cross which had received Papal approval as a congregation in 1857. While Sorin left the headquarters of the Congregation in France, he himself remained at Notre Dame and had the General Chapter meet here, as it did again this past Summer. Now Sorin was responsible for Holy Cross worldwide. He did travel widely, but always returned to Notre Dame where his heart always was, his first love.

In 1879, when Sorin was 65 years old and en route to France via Montreal, he had an opportunity to found Notre Dame once again. While workmen were tarring the roof of the Main Building, essentially the whole college at that time, the roof caught on fire and the whole building burned to the ground. Only Sacred Heart Church was spared because the prevailing West wind blew the fire away from the Church.

Sorin returned immediately from Montreal, convoked the whole community to a meeting in the Church, and essentially told them: This fire is really my fault. I came here as a young man and dreamed of building a great university in honor of Our Lady. But I built it too small and She had to burn it to the ground to make that point. So tomorrow, as soon as the bricks cool, we will rebuild it, bigger and better than ever.

The fire was on April 23, 1879. By May 17, Sorin had a sketch of the new building from W. J. Edbrooke, a Chicago architect. The same day they laid the new foundation. By June 21, the first story was up. A week later the second story. By the fourth of July, they were working on the fourth story, and the students were under the roof in September for a new school year. It took four and a half million bricks, with 56 bricklayers among the 300 workmen. Today, after a similar disaster, it would take two years for a feasibility study, but Sorin set the pace and others followed, despite the lack of money.

They nearly died when, the roof completed, he said, "Now we need a large tower with a Gold Dome on top and then crowning the

Dome, a golden statue of Our Lady so that everyone passing this way can understand why this place is special."

Everyone said "no." He left town and would not return until they said "yes." Somehow it was paid for, the St. Mary's students appropriately financed the statue of Our Lady, and today it is the most cherished symbol of Notre Dame. So much for vision and faith. Without them, nothing worthwhile would ever get founded.

In 1893, at the age of 79, Father Eduard Sorin died. He was buried in the Community Cemetery, a lovely spot on the road to St. Mary's, where he had already buried so many of his valiant companions who shared his faith and his vision. It was fifty-one years since he first came here. For half a century, he changed this place from a wilderness to a spiritual oasis for learning. He knew it was not yet a university. Shortly before his death, he said with all the fierceness that characterized his love for this place: "If there ever is a great Catholic university in America, it will be here."

Father Ned Joyce and I are now completing a similar span of years at Notre Dame. I arrived here in 1934 at the age of 17, fifty-two years ago, Father Joyce a year earlier. Apart from eight years of study in Rome and Washington from 1937-45, Notre Dame has been my home and my life. I have crossed the ocean twice Sorin's fifty times, but today travel is faster and easier than then. Next year, Father Joyce and I will be 70 years old, he in January and I in May, exactly one half of which will represent 35 years of walking in Sorin's footsteps. We have seen a good measure

of his dream come to reality, thanks to hundreds of valiant collaborators, but neither of us believes that we are anywhere near the final stages of Sorin's dream. Who can count the valiant souls who have labored and truly given their lives over 144 years to bring us thus far. They, too, shared the vision and the faith and so will all of you and all others who come after all of us.

My only concern is that having come thus far, from that Log Chapel by the frozen lake to all one sees all around us today, we might become complacent and self-satisfied. That would signal the end of the great dream.

It is my considered judgment that Notre Dame has come a long way, but still has a long way to go. This way is not necessarily the path of physical expansion, new buildings, a larger faculty or student body. The new facilities on the drawing board or about to be built should bring us close to an ideal great university in the physical sense. Our faculty and student body are close to ideal size for a residential university, especially with the new balancing of men and women that the two new women's residence halls will bring. With St. Mary's, we will then be 50-50, men and women. Our graduate student body is the one area still needing growth and, of course, we have the constant problem of larger minority representation in all we do.

But overshadowing all of this is the persistent need for greater quality in all the people who make up the University, faculty and students, administrators and staff, and Trustees as well. Of

course, presidential leadership can and will help, but what is essentially needed most is continued leadership up and down the line, especially in Provost and Vice Presidents, in Deans, and Department Heads, and throughout the body of faculty and students. Every appointment brings us nearer to or farther away from the ideal we seek: to be a great Catholic university.

I do not speak exclusively of intellectual leadership, although this is primarily what every good university is about. Because of the special history and heritage of Notre Dame, I speak also of moral leadership, the embodiment of personal values that exists pre-eminently in the lives that we all live. Our words speak, but our actions shout, as I believe St. Augustine first said. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for us to educate our students in the values that this University must proclaim if the students do not find our personal lives convincingly speaking to them of dedicated intelligence, justice, honesty, integrity, fidelity, generosity, especially love and magnanimity.

Albert Schweitzer showed these virtues as a Protestant theologian and a medical doctor in Africa. Ghandi portrayed these virtues as a Hindu, a national charismatic leader. Abraham Herschel personified these virtues as a Jewish Rabbi. John XXIII and Mother Teresa and our alumnus, Tom Dooley, exemplified these virtues as Catholics. They all have this in common: they inspired the young of our times because their lives personified what they proclaimed. They are the true leaders of our times, and great educators we well.

We may not rise to their level of excellence, but neither can we settle for moral ambiguity, or intellectual mediocrity. Whatever we say, we educate by our lives. At any rate, I say these things to indicate that we do indeed still have a long way to go. Our common and uncommon profession as educators is still a very high road to travel, not given to complacency, since the road leads ever upward for each one of us.

As the popular ballad says, there are many songs yet to be sung. May you all have a full part in singing them. And may Our Lord and His Blessed Mother continue to smile upon this place. As the Irish would say: "Keep the faith, pursue the vision." I am sure, in the spirit of Father Eduard Sorin, you will do just that. May God bless you all. Father Ned and I will leave you in great anticipation of greater realities yet to come.